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# Axis - A Theoretical Approach to Allegorical Pictorialism, Minimalist Ideologies, and Expressionism in Contemporary Photography.

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AXIS

A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO ALLEGORICAL PICTORIALISM, MINIMALIST IDEOLOGIES,  
AND EXPRESSIONISM IN CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY.

by

DAVID CURTIS KING

Under the Direction of Stewart Ziff

#### ABSTRACT

This Thesis explores the historical foundations and contemporary context of the photographic series titled Axis. Within Axis are vestiges of traditional Pictorial photography endowed with theories of minimalism and expressionism, which invites the audience to expand its insight from what it can see, to what it can understand, both visually and mentally. I will discuss how these influences have changed traditional pictorialism and will focus this series' trajectory. In examining the works of Axis, the theory, its active practice, and principle of this series become clear. This practice, vested with craft mastery, allegorical study, and symbolism, calls to question photography's long-standing fine art status and contemporary photographic trends.

INDEX WORDS: Abstract, Georgia State University, Graduate students, Thesis

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by

DAVID CURTIS KING

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Art

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2014

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David Curtis King  
2014

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by

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Georgia State University  
May 2014

## **DEDICATION**

In remembrance of my Father,

Curtis William King Jr.

“Sgt. Rock”, H-2/7 Vietnam (1966-1967)

1945-2013

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
INTRODUCTION .....	1
PICTORIALISM, MINIMALIST IDEOLOGIES, AND EXPRESSIONISM IN CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY .....	2
MASTERY AND CONCEPTUALISM .....	7
AXIS – THE WORKS OF DAVID KING .....	18
CONCLUSION .....	29
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	30

## LIST OF FIGURES

2.1: LANCELOT SPEED, MERLIN AND VIVIAN 1912.....	5
2.2: JULIA MARGARET CAMERON, VIVIEN AND MERLIN 1874.....	6
3.1: EDWARD STEICHEN, LILAS BUDS: MRS.S. 1906 .....	13
3.2: JULIA MARGARET CAMERON, MARIANA SHE SAID I AM AWEARY, AWEARY, I WOULD THAT I WERE DEAD 1875 .....	14
3.3: ANSEL ADAMS, MOON AND HALF DOME 1960 .....	15
3.4: ANGELO MUSCO, XYLEM 2013 .....	16
3.5: ANGELO MUSCO, XYLEM (DETAIL) 2013.....	16
3.6: CHRIS RAINIER, MENTAWIA, INDONESIA 2014 .....	17
4.1: DAVID KING, AXIS # 4 2013 .....	26
4.2: DAVID KING, AXIS # 8 2013 .....	27
4.3: DAVID KING, AXIS # 2 2013 .....	28



## **1. Introduction**

This Thesis explores the historical foundations and visual details of the photographic series titled Axis. This thesis will explain broad trends that I have identified in pictorial photography, in tandem with, the theory of Minimalism and its relationship with the audience, and subjective narrative elements gained from German Expressionism while focusing on skill sets and craft mastery. This arrangement involves the audience's cooperation on a higher plateau than has been needed previously within art photography. Though it is too early to tell if this is indicative to a broad movement, this thesis will discuss how these influences have changed traditional pictorialism and will focus the series' trajectory as a three-tier reactionary practice—reactions between the art and the audience, the creator and the created, and contemporary photographic movements. In examination of the series titled Axis, the theory, the active practice, and principle of the series become clear. This practice, vested in craft mastery, allegorical study, and symbolism, calls to question art-photography's long-standing fine art status and contemporary photographic trends.

## **2. Pictorialism, minimalist ideologies, and expressionism in contemporary photography**

Pictorialism originally emerged from the struggle to establish photography as not only a useful tool for functional description, that is as a vehicle for what we are referring here, today, as truth, and visual documentation. But as a creative medium that was accessible to the mark of the hand, and the mind, and was a suitable vehicle for what, speaking broadly, we might call the concerns of the poet.<sup>1</sup>

When looking at the series Axis, it is essential to understand that it combines elements and influences from a multitude of past art movements: American pictorialism, minimalism, and German expressionism. The simplest visual cues of Axis give values regarding pictorialism, id est: the use of romantic lighting, the vignetting, and the use of figurative study to name a few. Though, upon a more thorough inspection and decoding of the work, a broader net is cast and understanding of how minimalism and expressionism play part becomes relevant and necessary, as will be discussed.

The American pictorialist of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century abandoned notions that photography was only a tool of documentation and never to become its own form of high art, as was thought by the museum and gallery culture of that time. While painters of the time were questioning their reasoning for realistic representation within their own works on canvas, e.g. photorealism, the pictorialist sought to emulate paintings, not only in technique and composition, but also their subjecthood-- most notably historical and mythological events and figures (Fig. 2.1, 2.2). Axis borrows from pictorialist the need to create, or build an image, rather than document actions or events. In the activities of Axis, the image is mentally constructed and composed well before the camera is considered.

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<sup>1</sup> A. D. Coleman, "Return of the Suppressed: Pictorialism's Revenge", [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_Ig-AEe5AMs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Ig-AEe5AMs)

Every aspect of the image is mentally rehearsed: angle of view, composition, focal length, depth of field, et cetera. Also associated with the pictorialist, I value an appreciation for esthetic beauty within the work itself. While the work of the pictorialist frequently portrayed mythological scenes or historical context, within Axis I look to interpret associations of my own understanding, much like the painters in the expressionists' movement.

German expressionism was a direct retaliation to the French impressionist, and their philosophy was simple, as Dietmar Elger writes:

What the Expressionists depicted was a simple, organic symbiosis, based on the rhythm of nature alone. They created a utopian counter-world...  
...This process of coming to terms with the world was nearly always accompanied by the painter's personal emancipation.<sup>2</sup>

This opportunity to create art based solely on the artists view of events permeates the Axis series, as do the expressionist's desire to express and facilitate an involvement, subjectively, between artist and artwork. This emphasis on emotional space was incorporated again in the evolution of minimalism during the 1960's.

Critics described minimalist sculpture by its simple modern lines and its factory-made reductive properties. Comparable to expressionism, the idea of relationships has strong implications when dealing with artwork once that piece becomes public. Where the expressionist favored the bond between the art and the artist, minimalism dealt with relationships between the art and viewer. In minimalist sculpture, the relationship is an ethereal place where emphasis is placed on the physical interaction and movement of the viewer within the proximity of the piece. This interaction is also characterized by the

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<sup>2</sup> Dietmar Elger, *Expressionism: a Revolution in German Art*, Rev. ed. (Italy: Taschen GmbH, 2002), 9

approaching and witnessing of the viewer in direct visual contact to the art.<sup>3</sup> What Axis takes from minimalism is its relationship between the audience and to the art itself, their interactions and their communications.

This physical presence between viewer and art, and the subjective communication the viewer has during the time they maintain that relationship, becomes integral. This bond denotes that the Axis series exists as a reactionary form of art on a multitude of levels. These levels can be broken down into three distinct types-- reactions between the viewer and art, with the artist and created, as well as against other photographic and art movements.

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<sup>3</sup> Franco Bertoni, *minimalist Architecture* (Berlin, Germany: Birkhäuser Architecture, 2002), 15-23



Waving her hands and muttering the charm, and presently enclosed  
him fast within the tree.

p. 223.

2.1 Lancelot Speed, Merlin and Vivien 1912





2. 2 Julia Margaret Cameron, Vivien and Merlin 1874

### 3. Mastery and Conceptualism

For an artist, I feel, there is need to master one's craft in order to use it to its highest advantage and to better aid visual communication. Mastery of craft allows for a distinct read that allows the audience the availability of visual information required to communicate with the art piece. Though there is no guarantee in how an audience may read any given art piece, failure to perform to this level is subsequently a failure in the artist's communication; hence the story the artist has authored, what ever subject that may be, is lost completely. Subjectivity becomes the only merit, one that the artist never truly instilled into the art in the original. As I will discuss momentarily, in the origins of pictorial photography, certain rules of mastery were neglected or even abandoned altogether.

In order to invoke more theatricality to visual works founded in literature and history, many photographers of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century who were to become known as pictorialist heavily used artifacts such as lens manipulation and soft focus<sup>4</sup>, among mass other techniques. Looking at pictorial works such as Edward Steichen's *Lilas Buds: Mrs. S.* (Fig: 3.1), some of these artifacts, and his inherent lax in formal execution, become apparent. In this artwork, the artist depicts a youthful woman. The corners of the frame have a soft blur, the depth of field is shallow, and highlight and shadow values loose some detail. These effects cause the viewer to give attention to what only can be clearly read. This tunneling effect also seems to constitute a dream-like feeling, or an occurrence of a clouded memory, towards the viewer. Another pictorialist, Julia Margret Cameron, is well known for her pictorial photographs (Fig 3.2), which incorporate these same fundamentals. These artifacts, and others like it, were achieved in a variety of techniques. Early on, use of

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<sup>4</sup> A. D. Coleman, "Return of the Suppressed."

the view camera allowed for manipulation of the focal plane itself for a variety of results. By the 1850's the use of wet-plate collodion photography allowed photographers to manipulate the photographic emulsion due to its inherent attributes. A photographer achieved an effect by allowing the light-sensitive emulsion to move, causing a blur around the edges of the glass plate. Other photographers attained this by applying thin coats of petroleum-based solvents to the outer areas of their lens', these photographers were able to capture an image, which were sharp and in extreme focus in the center, yet softened and blurred going towards the edges, and vastly soft on the extreme edges (Fig 3.1). In today's environment this result can be reproduced with soft-focus or tilt-shift lenses or with digital software. Peter Bunnell, in his writings on "Pictorial Photography" states:

The Aim of this photographic style was to make poetic, expressive photographs related to, and, in some cases derived from, the traditional arts in matters of content and meaning. A tenet was that in issues of craft or technique, the act of making a fine photographic print was analogous to the creative and tangible articulation of materials in any medium.<sup>5</sup>

Selective focus, along with disregard for the highlight and shadow detail in early pictorial photography, abandoned a mastery of craft which for centuries had been sought after in all other disciplines of art, and strived for by other photographers of the time; as seen within in the works of Ansel Adams depicting his legendary landscapes of Yosemite National Park (Fig 3.6). This may be due in part to many non-pictorialist utilizing photography for a more scientific and or documentary nature in direct opposition to the pictorialist of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the Journal Of The University Film Association,

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<sup>5</sup> Peter C. Bunnell, "Pictorial Photography" Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University, Vol. 51:2 (1992): 2+10-15



Jonathan Green stated:

Photography has always been popular art. In spite of many early predictions that the medium would become a high art form, the vast majority of photographers have not used it to explore and resolve the problems of form and expression which we have come to know as sophisticated art.<sup>6</sup>

Herein lies a vast problem and paradox: even in the contemporary art world photography is still fighting for stature as a high and sophisticated art. At the same time if we argue against Green's assumption and state that photography has explored the problems of form and expression then we must conclude that it has failed in its pursuit, relegating it back to only a popular art form and not that of a high art or sophisticated one. If, indeed, photography had reached the suggested level of high and sophisticated art, then Green's statement would need abandonment in its entirety. Many others and I would argue that photography is still struggling for this accreditation. These matters are in fact due in part by photography's stance on mastery being irrelevant to procedure and conceptual execution; ideals fought against by those like Ansel Adams. In short, pictorial photography has disregarded art's basic principles and elements (Form, value, balance, unity, etc.). Yet this stance of concept over mastery becomes problematic due to its lack of visual vocabulary and its inability to provide accurate communication; conceptual comprehension is lost. Though one cannot just state the opposite, which would be that mastery should be given credence over conceptual, for then concept and meaning are lost. Given this, we can see that both mastery and conceptual practice must be given equal attention for an order of alignment, thus allowing for proper communication. This accounting for equilibrium is

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<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Green, "Photography as Popular Culture" *Journal of the University Film Association*, Vol. 30:4 (Fall 1978): 15-20

evident in further readings of Green's:

The term Pictorialism derives from a conception biased on the primacy of making a picture, not merely showing something or stopping an action or event, but taking the information of observable reality and transforming it in a way that is unique to the realm of two-dimensional art.<sup>7</sup>

With proper communication skills the artist photographer becomes able to enter into discussion on a higher, sophisticated level of fine art. Though as one door closes, another one opens. With the advent of the digital age, photographers are now pressed with new queries concerning digital manipulation and reproduction.

The concerns of digital manipulation of the image are complex. Where in manipulation has always been present in photography, critics argue for the "truth" of an image<sup>8</sup>. They state that once a photograph is manipulated it ceases to be a photograph and becomes an illustration. Though for years photographs were manipulated and still accepted. Miles Orvell stated in a symposium titled "Truth, Lies, and Photographs":

Arthur Rothstien's article on direction in the picture story, written for the complete photographer in 1942, makes clear the degree of manipulation that was accepted practice among social documentary photographers. Rothstien wrote "provided the results are a faithful reproduction of what the photographer believes he sees, what ever takes place in the making of the picture is justified."

That in mind, even early wet plate collodion negatives have been known to be stacked atop another to achieve details in a sky, or in the setting up a photograph, such as a still life, many argue that the act of taking a two-dimensional photograph is a manipulation in and of itself, betraying reality. The photographer manipulates the viewer's presence to

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<sup>7</sup> Green, 15-20

<sup>8</sup> Tom Gunning, "What's the Point of an Index? Or Faking Photographs" Nordicom Review, Vol. 1:2 (2004): 39-49

the situation by limiting your availability of information as well as interaction.

Manipulation now becomes choice-- the choice of the photographer of when to stop manipulating and not the fact that they have manipulated.

The apprehensions with digital photography's ability to reproduce is evident more so than in its predecessor, the dark room. In contemporary photography, there is only the artist who can deem how many identical prints will be made of any given image. In the recent past, photographers, utilizing traditional darkroom techniques, could make duplicate prints from the same negative, though each print may differ slightly due to acts of chemistry or printing strategies. With the advent of archival color printers and digital files, this is no longer an issue; the photographer only need to tell a computerized system to reproduce to whatever quantity desired. Artists, such as painters, never acquired this problem due to the medium's inherent qualities; one must paint in order to have a single, one-off painting. Photographers have had to endure this problem much as sculptural metal and ceramic artists have who use mold-making techniques in making their art. The lost-wax process can yield infinite, exact reproductions from a single mold, much the same way a photographer prints from a single digital file. In this tense climate of reproducibility, some photographers have pushed back against technology, regressing back to more historical photographic practices, which result in a one of a kind photographic art piece. Due to conflicting ideologies, a separation between traditional film photography and digital photography has raised subcultures and elitist mentalities within this medium.

Some contemporary pictorial photographers utilize the dry-plate method, and many other methods, while others have come to embrace technology and merely allow only for extreme short editions of their prints. Both photographers are worthy in their own rights.

The validity of photography's acceptance as a sophisticated high art form lay not in the use of any technique, but in the mastery of that specific technique. This attitude is vastly apparent in artist photographers such as Angelo Musco (Fig 3.4, 3.5), Chris Rainier (Fig 3.6), and in my own works.

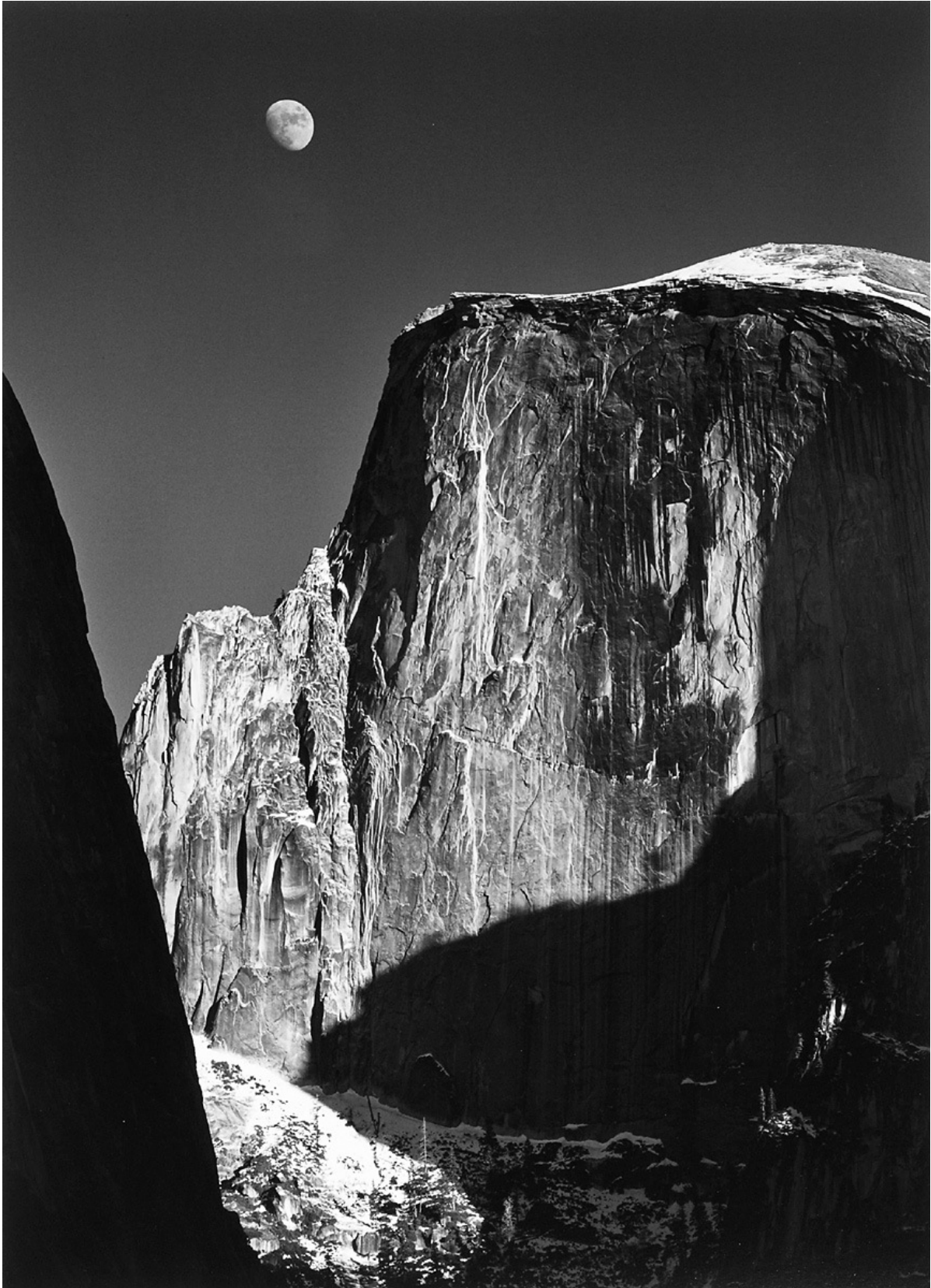


3. 1 Edward Steichen, Lilas Buds: Mrs. S. 1906



3. 2 Julia Margaret Cameron, Mariana She said I am aweary, aweary, I would that I were dead 1875





3. 3 Ansel Adams, Moon and Half Dome 1960



3. 4 Angelo Musco, Xylem 2013



3. 5 Angelo Musco, Xylem (detail) 2013





3. 6 Chris Rainier, Mentawia, Indonesia 2014

#### 4. Axis – The Works of David King

The interpretation of dreams and symbols demands intelligence. It cannot be turned into a mechanical system and then crammed into unimaginative brains. It demands both an increasing knowledge of the dreamer's individuality and an increasing self-awareness on the part of the interpreter.<sup>9</sup>

In the series titled Axis, ideas and influences from many different sources are brought together to explore, research, and visualize an emotional presence derived from subconscious thought. With attention to craft mastery, symbolism, and narrative, the focus of this work showcases allegorical scenes depicting opposing polarities and emotion.

These depicted scenes tell a story, or at least part of one. The camera is utilized here more than just a tool used for recording visual information, but in the same way a painter uses oils and brush strokes on a canvas, or a master-mason carves a stone-- in a careful, specific, predetermined effort for a specific outcome. The manner in which these artworks present themselves: their scale, subject matter, and symbolism persuades the viewer to regard them within the scope of art historical context, as will be discussed in the following passages. These photographic artworks are premeditated, composed, and rehearsed, just as a theatrical play is before its opening night. Like a theatrical production, there is an apparent aim to capture the audience's attention as well as to try to invite an affective response from them. Stephanie Cash, Editor of BURNAWAY Magazine, had this to say about the series:

The dreamlike black-and-white photographs of David King capture various models, in landscapes, in poses of struggle, surrender, searching, or ascension. King stages cryptic scenes in order to give visual form to emotional states and innermost thoughts...<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Carl G Jung, et al. *Man and his Symbols* (New York: J.G. Ferguson Publishing, 1964), 92.

This example of the theater also serves well for defining the idea of being a pictorial photographer. Like the theater, the intent of this approach to imagery is to personify not only the meaning of the work, but also its inherent esthetic beauty. Driving this is the belief that art, as a whole, has lost the formal beauty that it held before the modernist movement, and that which I am drawn to. By formal beauty, I mean the emphasis of mastery, formal principals, and elements of art (Unity, balance, shape, etc.) that are used for a specific purpose in which to make an artwork visually appealing as well as conceptually aware. This ideology, at times, directly conflict against other contemporary photographers who choose to abandon or neglect any thoughts of learning their craft, becoming solely reliant on theoretical conception without the ability to visually convey it.

The creation of this work is conceptualized as an experiment in subconscious thought. C.G. Jung, a psychologist of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, proposed the belief of specific archetypes and a collective unconscious within the subconscious of all individuals. Residing in our subconscious, these archetypes are personified by the “Anima/Animus, Shadow, and the Self”<sup>11</sup>. Using that idea as inspiration, this body of work started as an experiment to try and depict the actions of my subconscious. These works use symbolism recreating events within my own psyche discovered through sensory deprivation, meditation, and dream interpretation. The images are void of color as well as any specific narrative to allow their audience insight and subjective reinterpretation. The images explore an act of contemplation and the realization of instinctive and involuntary thought and practice while focusing on those inherent within one’s own self. This labor is an effort

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<sup>10</sup> Stephanie Cash, e-mail to author, November 12, 2013

<sup>11</sup> Jung, 165-196.

to isolate and deeply examine the genuine inner workings of emotional space. The emotional space, or vagueness, opens the viewer's own subconscious and allows for greater interaction with the art itself. While directing the audience's eye, this body of work is meant to push the audience to find their own message. Now; the source is not the direct subject of the work-- it was only the Muse, or stimulus, that ignited the inspiration at that time. Looking at some of these photographs singly, deeper meanings are found in every aspect of the image.

In Axis # 4, the audience is situated at an extreme low vantage point. In this highly center weighted photograph, a labyrinth of tree roots cradles a small sphere in the foreground. Just above the centerline, the tree roots give way to a flowing riverbank, nestled by a shadowed tree line. Breaking these horizons, two human legs are situated vertically down the centerline. They appear scuffed, muddy, and do not touch the ground. These components are not randomly placed; each element in this artwork is purposefully thought-out and positioned with care.

The composition of Axis # 4 (Fig 4.1) layers symbolism in an intriguing sonata of motion and fluidity. The center point to this photograph is the striking pair of legs and feet, which are stationed above the ground, independent of it. The legs and feet allude to discord with their filth, but show grace with their relaxed stance. In this visual, it is left to the audience to interpret whether this figure is suspended somehow from above or elevating from the earth. Some may argue that this image is a visual representation of the crucifixion of Christ. In both allegories we are given the visualization of a male who had a rigorous life infused with struggle; a life, which rose against opposition and the notion of turbulence. Below the legs and feet, the muddy tree roots give evidence of turmoil while

the motions of them show pathways and interchanges. Yet this turmoil unites into the single force of growth, represented by the tree. This is meant to symbolize the past and decisions one has made in a single lifetime. Settled within the roots of the tree sits a single sphere. The sphere is a direct reference to an idea and belief. This idea comes from the thought of, and actions taken to, perfecting one's "Self". This wholeness of self is well described by M.-L. Franz in, Carl G. Jung's book, *Man and his Symbols* while describing one man's dream:

The dark oval stone, that she rubs and polishes, symbolizes the dreamer's innermost being, his true personality. Rubbing and polishing stones is a well-known, exceedingly ancient activity of man.

The lioness and her son, which appear on the scene, personify the urge toward individuation, indicated by their work at shaping the round stones. (A round stone is a symbol of the Self.)<sup>12</sup>

This idea of the "Self" being visualized by a sphere in Axis #4 does not stand alone as definitive. In this image the stone "Self" is characterized by a great masher. A great masher, being the largest marble in the game of marbles, is most commonly used to either start the game or to end it by clearing the board. This duality in interpretation allies with the action of the legs, as described previously. Past the foremost imagery, we see a river flanked by a tree line. Here the trees symbolize both growth and observance by non-descript others, while the river and its flowing water reemphasize the flow of life and constant change. In opposition to this constant change, visually subdued within the twisted roots of the foreground, we find a single, large, rough, rock. This rock is a direct homage to Curtis King, my father. Featured here, within the turmoil of the roots, places this man, whose nickname was Sgt. Rock in the Vietnam War, directly in the pathways and

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<sup>12</sup> Jung, 205.

histories of the one whose life makes up the icon of the tree; in part, helping to direct, or impede.

In a second image, titled Axis #8 (Fig 4.2), the audience find themselves, once again, at a low angle, looking straight at an off-centered tree. Two hands wrap around the tree and are bound at the wrist to each other with thin rope. One hand clenches an opening in the tree as the other positions a wooden tool that is also bound in rope. In this transcendental landscape, the viewer is not allowed to see the top of the tree, nor the ground, but sight of a wild river flows towards the subject, just out of focus.

The photograph is artfully vignetted, bringing emphasis to the imposing tree trunk. The trunk's bark is cracked and broken; the tree is split down the center as rot, termites, and seeds spill from within the tree. The imagery of the tree is a surrogate to the life of the one who is bound to it and to the tree of life found across multiple religions (Celtic, Christianity, and Norse). The expulsion from the tree's center portrays aspects of the three stages of life, and also alludes to Danu, the triple goddess in traditional Irish Danann--maiden, woman, and hag-- as well as in Nordic religion of the Tree and the Three fates: past, present, and future. This employment of the number three is echoed again in a total of three times: three items pouring out of the tree, three objects bound, and by three lashes each.

The figure in this photograph is bound to the tree, but at the same time embracing it. The manner in which the hands are depicted show both strife and acceptance. One hand intensely grips the tree's opening, wanting to break free from the captivity, while the other lies in a dormant pose holding a tool that could possibly free the binds. This act is representational of the desire to leave and the conflict of complacency. The tool also serves

multiple purposes. While this instrument can be used as a freeing device, it is also an arcane writing utensil. As a writing device, this utensil is an implement of knowledge, but the fact that it is too bound nullifies its purpose as an artifact of education as well as its role in freeing of the individual. What we come to find is a being who is repelled by what they are embracing while having all the power to free themselves and choosing complacency as the bark digs into their body.

Axis # 2 (Fig 4.3) shows the audience a different perspective than Axis # 4 and # 8. The viewer is placed well above, looking downward towards the subject. A woman stands just off center, thigh deep, in a body of water. She is dressed in a white gown and is in the action of manipulating the water with a spaded shovel. Framing the top of the image stands a wall of metamorphic stone, the only indication of land in the image.

Within this artwork, symbolism is combined with theories of surrogacy and Jungian psychology. In this image the shovel serves as a representation for the conscious mind as it attempts to move and manipulate the surrounding water. The water, thusly, performs as the opposite, the subconscious. While retaining the icon of the subconscious, the water also serves to illustrate the flow of life and passage of time, as it does throughout the works of Axis. Here, water also serves as a point of origin and destination concurrently; it symbolizes the point from which we are born and must one day return.<sup>13</sup> Protruding from the water, the female form, basked in white, attempts to control the flow of the water. This physical attempt depicts the action and futility of trying to control both life and subconscious thought. As can be seen, while this entity carries out her manipulation, she herself is being manipulated, in return, by the water's influence on her flowing dress. This

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<sup>13</sup>Marie L. Sjoestedt, *Celtic Gods and Heroes* (New York: Dover Publications, 2000), 24-73

account causes an unending cycle-- while enclosed to one's self, the repercussions of which flow outward to affect things universally, as depicted by the rippling waters. The rock wall that frames the top portion of the photograph is a formidable boundary. This boundary allows the viewer to understand that this process is taking place inside a predetermined area. The broken reflections of this wall suggest that this area is within the subconscious itself, the water only being able to reflect the conscious domain that makes up this wall. In understanding that this artwork is an association to the subconscious, it is needed to also recognize the icon of the female from within it.

The icon of the female form becomes better understood when identified with surrogacy and Jungian psychology. C. G. Jung suggested all people have a masculine or a feminine archetype within their subconscious. In this system M.-L. Franz states:

If the dreamer is a man, he will discover a female personification of his unconscious; and it will be a male figure in the case of a woman. Often this second symbolic figure turns up behind the shadow, bringing up new and different problems.<sup>14</sup>

The idea of the Anima (feminine) and Animus (masculine)<sup>15</sup> allows the artwork to be viewed as a self-portrait, depicting actions between conscious and subconscious reasoning. This concept carries over to all works within Axis.

Upon approaching the physical artworks which makeup the series titled Axis, the audience is confronted not only with the scale of the photograph, approximately three foot square and larger, but also with each piece's stark contrast in value, their grave attention to detail, the overarching monochromatic atmosphere, and their inherent symbolism within allegorical themes.

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<sup>14</sup> Jung, 177.

<sup>15</sup> Jung, 177 - 195



What is extremely appealing is not just the art itself, but the meeting and conversation between the art and it's audience, no matter the subjecthood of the work. The aspect of these images that becomes apparent is the vast degree of subjective dialogue that arises, not towards the intended "storyline" but to this invisible "axis." This emotional space, or vagueness, opens the viewer's own subconscious and allows for greater interaction with the art itself. It is this relationship between the audience and art piece which allows Axis to surpass the physical boundaries of the art itself and gain further fruition. What matters most is not only the work itself, but also the relationship between the viewer and the art.



**Fig 4. 1 David King, Axis # 4 2013**



**Fig 4. 2 David King, Axis # 8 2013**



**Fig 4. 3 David King, Axis # 2 2013**

## 5. Conclusion

Looking at these works in concise detail it becomes clear how the series Axis is influenced by past art movements and theories, and how these influences have changed traditional pictorialism. This three-tier reactionary movement—in reaction between the art and the audience, between the creator and the created, and other contemporary photographic movements shows the art-author's push away from contemporary photography's desire to document and recontextualize and towards vestiges of traditional and formal practice in pictorial photography. The amalgamation of this effort and theories from sculptural minimalism and German expressionism allows for subjectivity while allowing the author to expressively create. This practice, vested in craft mastery, allegorical study, and symbolism, answers the questions regarding photography's long standing status in the art-world, and devotes it to a more sophisticated high-art form.

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